

Karen Miller

“Air Power Is Peace Power” The Aircraft Industry’s Campaign for Public and Political Support, 1943–1949

An analysis of the aircraft industry’s public relations campaign suggests that individuals’ thoughts and feelings about airplanes and atomic weapons, domestic politics, and international events had greater influence on public opinion and political action than the PR program. However, the industry’s public relations program did bring together many groups interested in air power. By linking these groups and capitalizing on the domestic and international situation, the public relations firm Hill and Knowlton of New York helped to create a climate in which air power was an acceptable solution to national defense and budgetary problems.

If investors in aircraft manufacturing companies had any doubts about the meaning of the end of World War II for their portfolios, management quickly informed them about the problems ahead. One typical company, All-American Aviation, Inc., let its stockholders know that “The fiscal year 1946–47 was an extremely difficult one for your company.” Like many aircraft manufacturers, All-American Aviation found itself approaching financial straits after the war, when the drastic drop in government contracts, together with labor strife and the unavailability of raw materials, spelled disaster. All-American explained to its stockholders that it would develop an air transport service in place of its former emphasis on manufacturing and engineering. Other aircraft makers likewise scrambled to

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find ways to survive, as military aircraft production dropped by more than ninety-eight percent.¹

Military officials had caught no one in the aircraft industry by surprise when they terminated \$9 billion worth of contracts in August 1945. A previous demobilization, after World War I, had produced an almost complete collapse of aircraft manufacturing. This experience had made deep impressions on people in the industry and the government, and they all expected similar conditions after World War II. But they hoped to make the process less disastrous than it had been after the Great War, and they went to work on these efforts even before the end of World War II. As part of their campaign, manufacturers turned to public relations. In late 1943 their trade association hired the public relations firm Hill and Knowlton of New York for a campaign promoting air power.²

Hill and Knowlton (H&K) spent the next years advertising the cause of air power and the need for an extensive aircraft industry. Although H&K representatives at times directly lobbied members of Congress, they focused their efforts on a grass-roots public relations program designed to pressure the government to support air power. With an annual budget of as much as \$300,000, the manufacturers (through Hill and Knowlton) embarked on the most extensive campaign for public support ever undertaken by the industry.

This public relations campaign merits scholarly review for a number of reasons. There are only a few general studies on public relations in the literature on business history, and the histories of many industries and corporations are incomplete because their programs to build relationships with important publics have not been described or analyzed. Current scholarship almost completely ignores the post-World War II growth of public relations. In the case of aircraft manufacturing, scholars have not reviewed the industry's postwar strategies to manipulate public opinion or evaluated the successes or failures of those campaigns.³

¹ Draft of President's Report, n.d., All-American Aviation, Inc. papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del., box 5, Drafts of President's Report (1947); John E. P. Morgan to W. Stuart Symington, 13 June 1946, Papers of W. Stuart Symington, Harry S. Truman Library (hereafter HSTL), Independence, Mo., box 1, Correspondence.

² Howard Mingos, "Birth of an Industry," in *The History of the American Aircraft Industry*, ed. G.R. Simonson (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), 25–69. By the end of 1945, contracts worth \$21 billion had been cancelled.

³ Louis Galambos and Joseph Pratt, *The Rise of the Corporate Commonwealth: U.S. Business and Public Policy in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1988); Alan R. Raucher,

Lack of information about public relations is particularly important because recent histories of postwar opinion management have seriously overestimated the power of public relations. Kim McQuaid, for example, states that "propaganda proved particularly important in the Truman era because masses were easy to sway." He argues that persuasion was comparatively simple when people had little understanding of economic issues. Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, although more cautious than McQuaid, also credits public relations campaigns with powerful effects, asserting that "a compliant press aided business in mobilizing public opinion" in the Taft-Hartley debate.⁴

Similarly, scholars have exaggerated the aircraft industry's ability to determine Congressional action and the Truman administration's hold over public opinion. Frank Kofsky argues that the Truman administration manufactured the 1948 war scare for the sole purpose of "administer[ing] an eleventh-hour resuscitation to the aircraft industry." An evaluation of Kofsky's thesis regarding foreign policy or the inner workings of the Truman administration is beyond the scope of this article, but his treatment of the press and public opinion is relevant. He asserts that "the fact that so many business publications were focusing on the situation of the aircraft industry as 1948 approached was not coincidental, for a consensus had emerged in both big-business and aviation circles: time was running out." Kofsky fails to acknowledge that the Aircraft Industries Association, through Hill and Knowlton, had been campaigning for press coverage for over three years, which means that press interest must have involved more than a business consensus. Like Susan Trento, who asserts that the campaign demonstrated that "big business could use public relations to get politicians to vote their way," Kofsky argues Congress "was easily swayed by the seductive appeal of 'air power.'" Both of these scholars insufficiently consider the thought processes of the audience and the idea that people concluded on their own that the country needed air power. Both seem to assume, instead, that the industry was the sole source of information on air power.⁵

Public Relations and Business, 1900-1929 (Baltimore, Md., 1968); Richard S. Tedlow, *Keeping the Corporate Image: Public Relations and Business, 1900-1950* (Greenwich, Conn., 1988).

⁴ Kim McQuaid, *Uneasy Partners: Big Business in American Politics, 1945-1990* (Baltimore, Md., 1994), 36; Elizabeth A. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-1960* (Urbana, Ill., 1994), 287.

⁵ Frank Kofsky, *Harry S. Truman and the War Scare of 1948: A Successful Campaign to Deceive the Nation* (New York, 1993), 2, 28, 234; Susan B. Trento, *The Power House: Robert Keith Gray and the Selling of Access and Information in Washington* (New York,

This article documents the anatomy of the postwar public relations program of one large trade association connected with aviation. It examines the industry's approach to the business-government dynamic from a public relations perspective. It shows the limits of the power of public relations to influence media coverage, legislation, and public opinion. This analysis suggests that increased procurement and changes in public opinion regarding air power were attributable not so much to the PR campaign as to individuals' thoughts and feelings about airplanes and atomic weapons, domestic politics, and international events. This does not mean that the campaign failed. Although the industry's public relations program did not lead directly to increased procurement or shifts in public opinion, it did bring together many groups that were interested in air power. By linking these groups and capitalizing on the domestic and international situation, Hill and Knowlton helped to create a climate in which air power was an acceptable solution to national defense and budgetary problems.

Hill and Knowlton, the Industry, and Aviation Policy after the War

The Aircraft Industries Association, comprising 175 members, included a dominant group of twenty-one airframe and engine manufacturers, and dozens of makers of accessories and parts, plus various affiliates and individuals.⁶ The AIA was not the only private agency interested in aviation after World War II. Other such organizations included the Air Transport Association, the National Aviation Trades Association, the Air Force Association, and the Air Line Pilots Association. Still, the AIA and its predecessors had served as the primary trade association for manufacturers since World War I. Formed in February, 1917, the Aircraft Manufacturers Association

1992), 60. Bruce J. Evensen's "Following a Famous President: Truman's Troubles with an Independent Minded Press," *American Journalism* 12 (Summer 1995): 242-59 contradicts the picture of a malleable press and public regarding foreign policy in the Truman era.

⁶ A complete list of AIA members as of September 1947 is included in the President's Air Policy Commission papers (hereafter PAPC), HSTL, box 6, B7-1. The largest manufacturers in the immediate postwar era were: Beech, Bell, Boeing, Consolidated Vultee, Curtiss-Wright, Douglas, Fairchild Engine and Airplane, Grumman, Lockheed, Glenn L. Martin, McDonnell, North American Aviation, Northrop, Republic, Ryan Aeronautical, and United Aircraft and Transport. John B. Rae, *Climb to Greatness: The American Aircraft Industry, 1920-1960* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), 190.

had dealt mainly with patent issues. In 1922 it reorganized as the Aeronautical Chamber of Commerce, which included not just manufacturers but operators, distributors, and trade publishers. In 1934 the airlines formed the Air Transport Association, and the Chamber focused more sharply on the manufacturers. World War II forced still another change in organization, with the creation of the Aircraft War Production Council, which was divided into east and west coast groups. This organization hired Hill and Knowlton in late 1943. Finally, in June of 1945, the manufacturers formed the AIA, with a Board of Governors consisting of the chief executives of twenty-one major companies. Eugene Wilson, who had been affiliated with the Navy, chaired the association through the end of World War II, after which Oliver Echols, chief of procurement for the Army Air Force (AAF) during the war, took over.⁷

The numbers tell a simple story of rapid postwar decline. Instead of encountering pent-up civilian demand as many other industries did, aircraft makers faced overwhelming surplus. Including subcontractors, aircraft manufacturing employment had risen to over 2.1 million during the war, but fell to 567,000 by war's end and to 237,700 by 1948. In 1944 the manufacturers produced 96,318 planes, all for the military; the following year, they made 49,761 planes, of which all but 2,047 were procured by the military. The drop in military procurement had a dramatic impact on the bottom line. An AIA analysis of the profits of twelve major airframe companies indicates that in 1945 company profits totaled \$67.4 million on sales of almost \$4 billion. But in 1946 the companies lost \$10.7 million on sales of \$519 million—despite “reserves that had accumulated during the war” and favorable tax laws. The year 1947 proved even more disastrous. Manufacturers lost \$41.9 million on sales of \$545 million.⁸

There were several sources of pressure to keep military spending down after the war. President Harry Truman and Secretary of Defense James Forrestal both considered high military expenditures

⁷ Walter T. Bonney, “Aviation Public Relations,” *Air Affairs* 3 (Winter 1950): 576–88. John W. Hill, *The Making of a Public Relations Man* (New York, 1963), 96–7; Aviation Industries Association, “Aircraft Manufacturing in the United States,” *Aviation Annual of 1946*, ed. Reginald M. Cleveland and Frederick P. Graham (Garden City, N.Y., 1946), 90–1; D. C. Ramsey, “Aircraft Industries Association,” *Air Affairs* 3 (Autumn 1949): 160–177.

⁸ Ben S. Lee, ed. *Aviation Facts and Figures* (Washington, D.C., 1956) (hereafter AIA 1956), 20, 7, 30. This book is an official annual publication of the AIA. “Report of the President,” AIA Annual Report, 4 Dec. 1947, John W. Hill papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin (hereafter SHSW), Madison, Wis., box 44, folder 6.

a major contributor to postwar inflation, and both subscribed to the notion that a “balanced military” (balanced, that is, among air, land and sea forces) offered the best protection.⁹ “Old isolationists” of the Republican party and “old Progressives” in Congress comprised two more groups who wanted to limit military spending, the former for economic and strategic reasons, the latter for ideological ones. Many Americans, while shunning isolationism *per se*, demanded demobilization. “Bring-Daddy-Home” clubs, letter-writing campaigns, and pleas of individual servicemen rang in the ears of government officials.¹⁰ The clamor was hard to ignore, even though national defense issues were equally pressing.

The debate over national security after the war encompassed much more than simply the plight of the aircraft industry. During the war, according to General Ira C. Eaker, the Army Air Force felt coequal with the Army and Navy, “but we were so busy with the war that we didn’t jeopardize the war effort by launching a campaign” for an independent U.S. Air Force. For this reason, only after the war did AAF officers, as Eaker put it, “lay plans pretty rapidly to get legislation enacted to implement coequal status.” Described by historian Daniel Yergin as “a bitter half-decade struggle over the question of how to organize America’s postwar military establishment most effectively,” unification of the armed services and independence for the aerial arm formed a central point of contention in the early Truman administration.¹¹

The unification question forced Hill and Knowlton to walk a fine line between army and navy desires regarding air power. Neither the agency nor the manufacturers could afford to antagonize any element of the military or of Congress during the unification debate. Certainly an independent air force would work to the industry’s benefit, and H&K had close ties with top AAF officials through

⁹ Robert A. Pollard, *Economic Security and the Origins of the Cold War, 1945–1950* (New York, 1985), 228–29; Harry S. Truman, “Special Message to the Congress,” 19 Dec. 1945, *Public Papers of the Presidents, 1945* (Washington, D.C., 1961); Steven L. Reardon, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense*, v. 1, *The Formative Years, 1947–1950* (Washington, D.C., 1984), 313–15.

¹⁰ Justus D. Doenecke, *Not to the Swift: The Old Isolationists in the Cold War Era* (Lewisburg, Pa., 1979), 161–66; Robert Griffith, “Old Progressives and the Cold War,” *Journal of American History* 66 (Sept. 1979): 334–47; Pollard, *Economic Security*, 24; Gregg Herken, *The Winning Weapon: The Atomic Bomb in the Cold War, 1945–1950* (New York, 1982), 215.

¹¹ “Reminiscences of Ira C. Eaker,” (1974), Oral History Collection of Columbia University (hereafter COHC), 36; Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State* (Boston, Mass., 1977), 201.

former procurement chief Echols. But, according to historian John B. Rae, the Navy, an important aircraft customer in its own right, disliked "what it considered an excessive commitment of the nation's military resources" to a strategy that "relied on long-range aerial bombardment with nuclear weapons at the expense not only of surface forces but of the tactical employment of air power." The Navy opposed unification, particularly if it meant any loss of what it called "sea air power." H&K's position was complicated further by the fact that the Shipbuilder's Council of America was another of its clients. The PR executives' proposed program for the Shipbuilders in 1947 was similar to that of the AIA, although at a more modest budget of \$50,000 to \$75,000. H&K executives solved the dilemma by refusing to take sides, avoiding public comment on unification and focusing instead on the need for an improved procurement policy. This precarious situation eased with unification of the services in the National Defense Act of 1948.¹²

Manufacturers responded to the postwar calamity in numerous ways. Strategies to return to peacetime status ranged from diversification into nonaeronautical fields, to development of passenger and cargo transport capabilities, to research on new technology such as guided missiles and jet propulsion. Some companies tried hard to develop a civilian market. According to AIA figures, manufacturers sold 35,001 airplanes to non-military buyers in 1946. But that number could not be sustained. In 1947 only 15,617 and in 1948 just 7,302 planes were sold to civilians. During those three years the number of planes sold to the military averaged just over 2,000.¹³

While individual companies' responses to the crisis varied, the approach of the industry as a whole was to seek government assistance. Even in 1943 aircraft makers had assumed that reconversion would be difficult and that government held the key to the industry's survival. In 1945, AIA's first staff report indicated that the Board of Governors was most concerned about surplus disposal, export mar-

¹² Rae, *Climb to Greatness*, 196; Vincent Davis, *Postwar Defense Policy and the U.S. Navy, 1943-1946* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1966), 149; "A Program to Bring the Keller Report Before Congress and the Public," 7 Aug. 1947, Hill papers, box 5; Hill to H.G. Smith, 26 April 1949, Hill papers, box 9. It is possible that the Shipbuilders postwar campaign was smaller because the Navy and the Navy League concentrated their efforts on opposing unification and naval aviation. Armin Rappaport, *The Navy League of the United States* (Detroit, Mich., 1962), 186-95.

For unknown reasons, the Shipbuilders began to cut their public relations budget, temporarily suspending publication of the industry magazine, in August of 1947 and ended their association with H&K in mid-1949.

¹³ Rae, *Climb to Greatness*, 174; AIA 1956, 7.

ket promotion, an airport bill, labor relations, and “public appreciation of aircraft problems,” meaning “strong editorial support, favorable radio and press, [and] public and congressional support of air power.” In the long term, the report added, “Continuation of Government-Science-Industry partnership is essential to our military and economic security and to world peace,” the AIA being “the medium through which the industry operates within the team.”¹⁴

But government assistance was carefully defined. The AIA called for a national air policy that would provide for research and development, military procurement, and revision of restrictive legislation on air transport and personal flying. It devoted large portions of its budget to H&K’s public relations campaign to convince American taxpayers of the importance of such a policy. Still, manufacturers wanted to limit government intervention by maintaining a free enterprise system of private companies seeking government contracts, not a nationalized aircraft manufacturing system.¹⁵

Primary sources on the earliest years of Hill and Knowlton’s air power campaign of 1943-1946 are sparse, but other sources indicate that the program was extensive—and unsuccessful. The April, 1944 policy statement of the AIA was presented to Congress and agencies such as the War Production Board. The AIA also sponsored speakers, publicity, and a radio program. In 1945 AIA published seven different booklets, distributed reprints from the *Congressional Record*, and developed press contacts, while company officials spoke over the radio and before large audiences. H&K assisted in preparation of statements that AIA officials made before numerous commissions and Congress with members appearing before six different committees in 1945. Agents also developed and publicized the slogan “Air Power Is Peace Power.”¹⁶ None of this activity, however, resulted in maintenance of appropriations. Canceled contracts remained the rule.

Military and industry leaders alike agreed that a more substan-

¹⁴ “AIA Report of the President for 1945 and Program for 1946,” Boeing-Vertol papers, Hagley Museum and Library, box 30, AIA-1949.

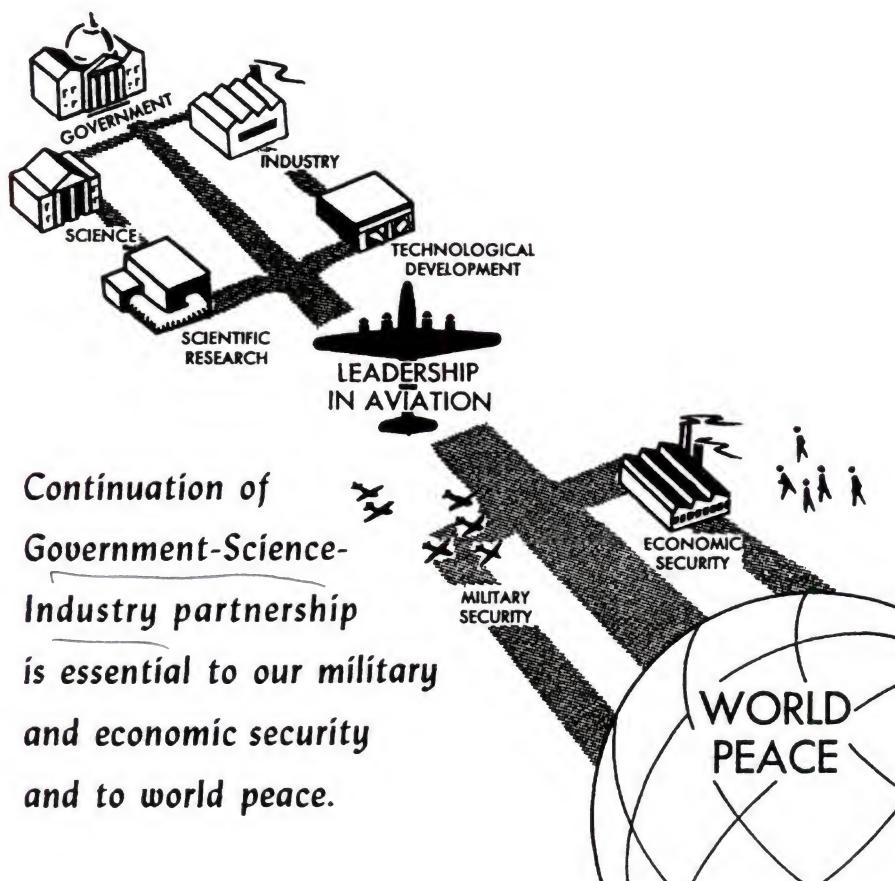
¹⁵ “AIA Report of the President for 1945 and Program for 1946,” Boeing-Vertol papers, box 30, AIA-1949; “Proposed Revision of the Public Relations Program,” 26 July 1951, Boeing-Vertol papers, box 30, AIA-1951. Gregory Hooks, *Forging the Military-Industrial Complex: World War II’s Battle of the Potomac* (Urbana, Ill., 1991), 241-61; Donald J. Mrozek, “The Truman Administration and the Enlistment of the Aviation Industry in Postwar Defense,” *Business History Review* 48 (Spring 1974): 75.

¹⁶ John C. Lee, “Public Relations in the Aircraft Industry,” *Public Relations Journal* 2 (May 1946): 10-11; “AIA Report of the President for 1945 and Program for 1946,” Boeing-Vertol Division papers, box 30, AIA-1949.

OUR SITUATION TODAY

Scientific Research and technological development are the keys to American leadership in aviation.

Cooperation between Government, Science and Industry is responsible for our scientific research and technological development.



"Our Situation Today" • This is a page from an AIA report prepared by H&K in 1945 picturing the postwar relationship they hoped for. (Reproduced from the Boeing-Vertol Papers, courtesy of the Hagley Museum and Library.)

tional program was needed. During a 1946 meeting of industry, government, and military officials, leaders of the armed services concluded, in the words of H&K's John W. Hill, "our air power was facing extinction," and urged the industry to "arouse Americans to the danger they were courting." The AIA's Board of Governors

therefore instructed its Public Relations Advisory Committee, composed of company PR directors, to work with H&K to develop an air power program.¹⁷

Hill and Knowlton's New York office had begun as an extension of its Cleveland headquarters, but the company had split into two firms in 1947. The principal founder, John Hill, had established the Manhattan branch to better serve the American Iron and Steel Institute, the agency's flagship account. H&K of New York had few other clients, but it was eager to expand. It opened a Los Angeles office to accommodate the large number of AIA member companies on the west coast, and it eventually became the largest PR firm in the world. The AIA account was large—with a proposed budget of about \$300,000 for 1947—but not compared to that of the Steel Institute, which was spending on the order of \$1.5 million a year during the late 1940s.¹⁸

The aircraft industry's turn to public relations represented an important departure from previous strategies. The historian Jacob Vander Muelen, whose analysis focuses most closely on the two World Wars and interwar eras, concludes that "the key to understanding why most aircraft look and perform the way they do is the way they were understood in terms of national security." Congress, Vander Muelen argues, dominated the industry because of aircraft procurement for the military; contracting rules shaped the industry as national security needs shaped the airplane.¹⁹ The post-World War II opinion campaign was an attempt to introduce another voice, the public's, to the debate. The industry hoped to use public opinion as a lever to pry open the federal wallet.

Hill and Knowlton's Campaign

H&K's campaign was directed out of AIA's Washington office by Bert Goss, who had been a vice-president of the firm since 1945. A competitor at another agency recalls Goss as a "sort of homespun, disarming" man "with a very deep, Texas southern accent." He had a doctorate in banking and finance and taught finance at New York

¹⁷ Hill, *Making of a PR Man*, 102.

¹⁸ "Outline of Public Relations Activities," May 1947, Hill papers, box 52, folder 10; "Proposed Public Relations Budget," 18 Jan. 1949, Hill papers, box 62, folder 7.

¹⁹ Jacob A. Vander Muelen, *The Politics of Aircraft: Building an American Military Industry* (Lawrence, Kans., 1991), 1, 5.

University before becoming *Newsweek*'s business, labor, and agriculture editor. Goss's staff included both AIA and H&K employees, and an H&K executive attended all AIA board and committee meetings. H&K representatives even participated in a conference involving AIA's president, executive director, and Assistant Secretary of War for Air Stuart Symington.²⁰

The PR program encompassed but was not limited to the battle for military appropriations. Agents also promoted air safety, travel, and other aspects of civil aviation. But the military element was by far the most public and controversial aspect of H&K's work. And even the military emphasis came to focus on strategic bombing at the expense of other functions. AIA's former chairman Eugene Wilson despaired in 1950 that to the public and even to many in aviation circles, "air power" meant "strategic bombing," even after successful peacekeeping missions such as the Berlin Airlift.²¹

Fortunately for H&K, the aircraft industry already had numerous allies at the end of World War II. Hundreds of thousands of individuals across the United States found airplanes fascinating. Many considered national security a top priority and viewed air power as a cheap way to defend their country while keeping government spending to a minimum. If H&K could align these groups behind a central message, the industry's overall constituency would be formidable. The agency now began to focus its efforts on elected officials, journalists, and civic organizations.

H&K Seeks a Federal Air Policy

The main goal of H&K's campaign was to get a federal "audit of our air power problems." By 1947 federal authorities began to show increased interest in developing an air policy. President Truman had already authorized an Air Coordinating Committee to gather information from all government agencies with a major interest in aviation, but when a pro-aviation senator began to push for a

²⁰ Telephone interview with Harold Burson (Burson-Marsteller), 29 March 1993.

Half the AIA budget went to PR in 1947, and about one-third in other years. "AIA Report of the President for 1945 and Program for 1946," Boeing-Vertol Division papers, box 30, AIA-1949. "Memorandum for Mr. Symington" from Col. John B. Montgomery, 17 Aug. 1946, Symington papers, box 1, Correspondence. Hill to James P. Murray, 23 Nov. 1943, Hill papers, box 46, folder 3. An example: Helicopter Council secretary Don Mockler worked for H&K, not AIA.

²¹ Eugene E. Wilson, "The Moral Edge," *Air Affairs* 3 (Winter 1950): 546.

Congressional review of policies, Truman appointed his own high-profile board to short-circuit this move. In July, 1947, Truman appointed an Air Policy Commission and Congress sponsored a joint Aviation Policy Board. Each group was instructed to study aircraft industry problems and civilian and national defense needs.²²

Chaired by Thomas K. Finletter, the President's Air Policy Commission made its report on 1 January 1948, later published under the title *Survival in the Air Age*, after five months of exhaustive hearings.²³ Its recommendations delighted the industry. The commissioners had set an "A-day," 1 January 1953, the earliest date they believed an atomic attack on the U.S. could occur. They then based the entire report on estimated war requirements and projected appropriations, research and development, and industry needs from these requirements. The United States, said the Commission, "must be ready not for World War II but for a possible World War III." This meant maintaining "a force in being in peacetime greater than any self-governing people has ever kept." While ground and sea forces must be maintained, "our military security must be based on air power." The Commission recommended an Air Force of seventy groups plus twenty-two special squadrons with a total of 12,400 modern planes, as advocated by the first Secretary of the Air Force, Stuart Symington. This was more than the Truman Administration's suggestion of fifty-five groups with 10,800 planes.²⁴

The seventy versus fifty-five group battle indicates the lengths to which the Air Force was willing to go to defy Truman in its campaign for strong air forces. The Department of the Air Force estab-

²² The Air Coordinating Committee was created by Executive Order 9781 in March 1945. "Washington Outlook," *Business Week* (26 July 1948), 6. John W. Hill, *Corporate Public Relations: Arm of Modern Management* (New York, 1958), 135. See also, "General Echols' Air Policy Program" in P.R. Memo 47-14, Activity Report for 18 Jan. to 17 Feb. 1947, Hill papers, box 43, folder 11.

²³ The other members were: George P. Baker, vice chair, Palmer Hoyt, Henry Ford II, and Arthur D. Whiteside; Ford resigned early in the investigation and was replaced by John A. McCone. Finletter had served in the Army in World War I, and Baker on the Army's air staff during World War II. Hoyt was publisher of the *Denver Post*, while Whiteside was president of Dun and Bradstreet; McCone's company had been associated with the AAF during the war, but was more closely connected with oil refining, chemistry and shipbuilding than aviation. See Biographical Material in the papers of Horace E. Weihmiller, HSTL, box 6, Reports-APC.

²⁴ President's Air Policy Commission, *Survival in the Air Age* (Washington, D.C., 1948), 7-8; "Statement of Thomas K. Finletter," Weihmiller papers, box 6, Reports; Memorandum to Finletter (from McCone), n.d., PAPC, box 25, F2-3; PAPC, box 26, F4-1; and S. Paul Johnston to J. Edgar Hoover, 3 Nov. 1947, PAPC, box 26, F4-2; Rae, Climb to Greatness, 193.

lished a Directorate of Public Relations in September, 1947, and it grew to have a staff of 110 people by 1949. During the Finletter hearings, Secretary Symington ignored the administration line that fifty-five air groups were sufficient, admitting that he believed seventy groups would best serve national security. Industry officials of course also opposed the fifty-five group plan, which would have required no new appropriations.²⁵

The Joint Congressional Aviation Policy Board's report closely mirrored the Finletter commission's findings. The Board's chair and vice-chair, Senator Owen Brewster of Maine and Representative Carl Hinshaw of California respectively, both vigorously supported enhanced air power. Brewster's speeches went further than most by naming the USSR as the potential enemy and the reason for a strong aviation policy. Hinshaw supported the industry without hesitation, perhaps in part because so many manufacturers had located plants in his district. The Board concluded that "the United States has no other course to follow but to maintain such a military air force and civil air effort that no sudden attack upon the American people can succeed—and that any such attack will prompt swift and awful retribution." It supported the Finletter report and advocated the Air Force seventy-group plan.²⁶

The reports of the Finletter commission and the congressional board gave the AIA's campaign a huge boost. Hill and Knowlton worked vigorously to publicize both boards' reports. AIA's magazine, *Planes*, devoted an entire issue to the Finletter report. Companies ordered enough copies to give one to every employee. H&K sent bulk quantities to the American Legion and the military, giving the issue a run of over 150,000. The agency planned another special issue for the Congressional Board findings in March. In fact, Goss thought that, because Congress controlled the purse strings, the sec-

²⁵ See Symington to Gen. H. H. Arnold, 17 Nov. 1948, Symington papers, box 1, Correspondence; "Reminiscences of Stuart Symington," (1981), HSTL, 35. *Business Week* claimed military leaders were "in all but open revolt" against Truman; "Washington Outlook," *Business Week* (10 April 1948): 15. George M. Watson, Jr., *The Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, 1947-1965* (Washington, D.C., 1993), 56, 58, 38-9. Memorandum to the Secretary of the Air Force, 13 May 1948, HSTL, Truman papers, President's Secretary's File 157, Air Force-Symington; Rae, *Climb to Greatness*, 194.

²⁶ Congressional Air Policy Board members from the Senate: Albert Hawkes (N.J.), Homer Capehart (Ind.), Edwin Johnson (Col.), Ernest McFarland (Ariz.); from the House: Charles Wolverton (N.J.), Karl Stefan (Neb.), Alfred Bulwinkle (N.C.), Paul Kilday (Tex.). United States Senate, Congressional Aviation Policy Board, "National Aviation Policy," Report 949, 80th Congress, 2d session (Washington, D.C., 1948), 4, 7.

ond report was the more important and “must be promoted with every available resource.”²⁷

H&K’s work involving the commissions extended far beyond ballyhoo. Almost any time industry officials were to give testimony, H&K prepared their remarks. In 1948, for example, agents prepared statements for industry leaders to give before the boards and publicized those statements through news releases and “Elements of American Air Power,” a booklet of the complete text of papers presented before the President’s Commission. The AIA appointed a liaison to the Finletter board. H&K considered “a major activity” its time spent “answering requests for data and other information from the staff” of the Congressional Board, via General Echols or the four AIA members of the Industry Advisory Board of the committee. The agency assisted in preparations for the release of both commission reports, drafting a letter of transmittal to accompany the release of the Air Coordinating Committee’s policy statement to the press.²⁸

Hill and Knowlton also worked directly with members of Congress to promote AIA policies. In 1948, when Congress was in the midst of considering Air Force appropriations, Bert Goss wrote to Senator Styles Bridges, the Republican chair of the appropriations committee who had introduced a bill for funding exceeding the President’s request. Goss requested from Bridges a statement for publication in *Planes*. “We realize you are currently engaged in an election campaign and that you may find it extremely difficult to get enough time to prepare the article,” Goss wrote. “In view of this situation,” the editor “has prepared a rough draft of the type of piece we had in mind.” As further incentive, Goss offered “wide-spread publicity and promotion” for the article, as well as “several hundred copies of the issue” for distribution in New Hampshire, Bridges’ home state. He enclosed back issues of *Planes* to “show the type of feature articles other Congressional leaders have sponsored in the past.”²⁹ Bridges, already an air power champion, complied with Goss’ request.

²⁷ P.R. Memo 48-10, Activity Report for 2 Dec. 1947 to 23 Jan. 1948, Hill papers, box 43, folder 11; Goss to Eugene Wilson, 23 Jan. 1948, Hill papers, box 54, folder 5.

²⁸ Mention of preparation of remarks is made, for example, in P.R. Memo 47-44, Activity Report for 21 April to 28 May 1947, Hill papers, box 43, folder 11. Sam S. Tyn dall to R. H. Sutherland, 24 Sept. 1947, Hill papers, box 44, folder 2. H&K news release on PAPC testimony, 28 Sept. 1947, PAPC, box 6, B7-1; “Report of the President,” Annual Report, 4 Dec. 1947, Hill papers, box 44, folder 6; Goss to Hal Davis, 21 Aug. 1947, Hill papers, box 44, folder 2.

²⁹ Hill, *Making of a PR Man*, 103; Goss to Sen. Styles Bridges, 20 Sept. 1948, Hill papers, box 46, folder 12.

Favorable commission recommendations and assistance to elected officials could not by itself assure the AIA of continuing government commitment to a strong air program. Only public support could accomplish this. AIA leaders had long understood the need to sell air power to the public. During the war they had approached then Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn for advice. Rayburn told them they had a good program, but that Congress responded to what "folks back home think." This advice provided the impetus for the campaign to convince the public that the U.S. required air power—and that they should be willing to pay for it.³⁰

Because public support was paramount, Hill and Knowlton planned a program to take the industry's story "to the grass roots by word of mouth, by the printed word, and by radio." It would reach "taxpayers and voters, . . . editors and writers, educators, leaders of powerful national group organizations and many other molders of public opinion." According to the plan developed by the agency, the program would show

- a. The need for the enactment of national air policy . . . ,
- b. The vital role that must be performed by the Air Services currently, pending the development and perfection of the "push button era",
- c. The need for and the requirements for industrial preparedness planning,
- d. The nature and cost of needed research and development . . . ,
- e. The . . . accomplishments of aerial research and aircraft production in the war.³¹

H&K's Campaign for Media Support

The cheapest route to reach the general public is through the news media, and AIA started its effort by working with the journalists organized in the Aviation Writers Association (AWA). Because substantial interest in airplanes and flight already existed, many journalists specialized in aviation, and in 1938 they had formed this association of reporters and editors, public relations representatives (including H&K executives), and other writers associated with aviation. The writers' group was closely aligned with the AIA. In fact, its

³⁰ "Reminiscences of Eugene E. Wilson," Naval History Project, COHC, 808-9.

³¹ "Special Public Relations Program for AIA" 20 Sept. 1946, Hill papers, box 52, folder 10.

headquarters address was the same as the AIA's—which was the same office where Bert Goss worked. AIA and AWA coordinated the dinner that introduced the Finletter report to the press, and AIA member companies sponsored a cocktail party and dinner for the writers' annual convention. These writers were aviation loyalists. Some of them had helped revise Congress's policy report to make it more concise and readable.³²

The agency used numerous other methods to improve press and radio coverage of air power. H&K took to task those who made errors or misrepresented the aircraft industry. Doris Fleeson of the *Washington Star* received a three-page critique of her column, "The Air Force Lobby," with corrections or comments on five specific statements Bert Goss found questionable. The agency scheduled a series of luncheons so that AIA officials could meet with people in the news business. H&K claimed that this kind of approach resulted in numerous network programs and syndicated articles "graphically describing the industry's plight and the need for air policy legislation." H&K executives offered assistance gathering information, and provided statistics to reporters. They also frequently ghost-wrote letters of appreciation from AIA chief Echols to journalists whose articles they liked.³³

H&K agents tried to magnify the demand for news on air power. When in 1947 Senator Owen Brewster gave an air power speech at the American Legion's aeronautics conference, H&K staff members became concerned that journalists in Indianapolis (the Legion's headquarters) might overlook the story. If the local wire service stringers failed to pick it up, and if New York papers did not ask for it, then Brewster's speech would effectively die. "As a result," public relations executive Sam Tyndall reported to H&K management, "the only method to get local bureaus to file stories was to create a demand for the story in cities outside Indianapolis." Agency staffers then managed to get sympathetic editors in Hartford, Connecticut, Paterson, New Jersey, Seattle, Washington, and the United Press in

³² P.R. Memo 48-10, Activity Report for 2 Dec. 1947 to 23 Jan. 1948, Hill papers, box 43, folder 11; Goss to Echols, 26 April 1949, box 46, folder 13; "Air Policy," *Tide* 22 (12 March 1948): 58.

³³ Goss to Doris Fleeson, 24 Feb. 1949, Hill papers, box 46, folder 13; P.R. Memo 47-44, Activity Report for April 21 to May 28, 1947, Hill papers, box 43, folder 11. The client files do not contain lists of press contacts until later, but a 1956 weekly summary indicated contact with 28 different reporters on stories regarding costs, effects of strikes on the industry, production rates, guided missiles, procurement, traffic control, Russian aircraft, and security policies; "Press Contacts—week of July 16–20, 1956," Hill papers, box 43, folder 9. Echols to Chet Shaw, 3 July 1947, Hill papers, box 46, folder 3.

Detroit to ask wire service general desks for more information on Brewster's speech. The wires complied by asking their Indianapolis bureaus for full details on the story. Soon the story went across the wires' trunk lines to major cities, and newspapers and radio stations everywhere had access to the report. Many New York papers carried the story: the *Journal American*, *World Telegram*, *Times*, *Herald Tribune*, *Daily News*, and *Sun*. Radio coverage included two network broadcasts from New York and a second spot on that day's "AP Radio" hourly newscasts.³⁴

Hill and Knowlton thus used numerous tactics to work through the news media to inform taxpayers about the need for a strong air component to the military. But, in allocating its budget of \$300,000, the agency was more interested in specific subgroups than in the general public. AIA needed people who were so strongly committed to air power that they would actively encourage government action on the issue.³⁵

H&K Energizes Interested Public Organizations

People with direct connections to the aircraft industry comprised the first group of advocates H&K tapped for support. Employees of AIA member companies, subcontractors and their workers, and company directors could "take the story in person to groups who would not otherwise receive it." Goss made a list of important industrialists and financiers the program should reach: National Association of Manufacturers leaders such as Charles Hook and Howard Pew, bankers such as Junius S. Morgan, and business leaders such as Laurance Rockefeller. Industry employees, especially those at supervisory levels and those located outside cities with aircraft plants were encouraged "to write to editors on the air power situation."³⁶ But it was crucial to identify the program with more than just self-interested industry insiders.

Hill and Knowlton therefore looked outward for support, and cultivated farm and union groups, women's clubs, and religious organizations. H&K gave special consideration to civic groups. The U.S.

³⁴ Samuel S. Tyndall to Hill, Goss and Mapes, 21 March 1947, Hill papers, box 53, folder 10.

³⁵ P.R. Memo 47-103, Activity Report for 1 Sept. to 1 Dec. 1947, Hill papers, box 43, folder 11. H&K came in under budget.

³⁶ "Outline of Public Relations Activities for the Fall and Winter," 28 May 1947, Hill papers, box 52, folder 10; Goss to Hill, 12 Feb. 1947, Hill papers, box 44, folder 2.

Chamber of Commerce made a public statement on air power and defense spending in May, 1947, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars took an even more active role, passing resolutions, issuing news releases, and calling for "the most powerful air force in the world." H&K even considered ten- to eighteen-year-olds, noting they would "be voting at the time when there is the greatest pressure for air disarmament." Executives asked the Air Power League, a nonprofit educational group, to develop a program targeted at children's interests, such as model plane building and scouting.³⁷

H&K could reach such groups in several ways, including AIA publications. About 40,000 opinion leaders—college professors, state legislators, libraries, ministers, and business leaders—received *Planes*, the bi-monthly magazine produced by the agency. Another 10,000 copies were sent to print and radio journalists, along with a special clipsheet for media use. Another widely disseminated AIA publication was the *Aircraft Yearbook*, an annual volume of statistics and reports on the industry and its products. Staff members spent time with subcontractors, supplying materials for house organs, a booklet, and *Planes* to parts manufacturers and others interested in aviation. Finally, in cooperation with other aviation associations, the AIA offered writing fellowships and sponsored the publication of books on air power.³⁸

The Association could also reach members of private organizations through their own meetings and publications. The AIA's traveling speaker, Harvey Stowers, spent most of his time with civic clubs giving speeches prepared by H&K on the dire need for a strong air defense. The agency furnished mailings for VFW posts, and provided suggestions for articles in the VFW's national monthly magazine. H&K also maintained regular contact with the U.S.

³⁷ "Outline of Public Relations Activities for the Fall and Winter," 28 May 1947, Hill papers, box 52, folder 10; Echols to Harry Woodhead, 7 May 1947, Hill papers, box 46, folder 3; Echols to General Bonner Fellers, 5 Sept. 1947, Hill papers, box 46, folder 3. Goss to Fellers, 14 Jan. 1947, Hill papers, box 53, folder 13; Samuel S. Tyndall and R. H. Sutherland to Hill, 9 June 1947, Hill papers, box 46, folder 9.

³⁸ "Report of the President," AIA Annual Report, 4 Dec. 1947, Hill papers, box 44, folder 6; Goss to Sen. Hal Davis, 3 Feb. 1947, Hill papers, box 52, folder 9. See, for instance, AIA *Aircraft Year Book for 1948* (Washington, D.C., 1948). P.R. Memo 47-103, Activity Report for 1 Sept. to 1 Dec. 1947, Hill papers, box 43, folder 11. Two AIA-sponsored books were Frank J. Taylor and Lawton Wright, *Democracy's Air Arsenal* (New York, 1947) and Harold B. Hinton, *Air Victory: The Men and the Machines* (New York, 1948).

Chamber of Commerce, and it planned meetings between AIA officials and influential business leaders.³⁹

The most important conduit between the AIA and the public was the American Legion, which entered into partnership in the "Air Power Is Peace Power" campaign in 1947. Although the Legion favored universal military training, which H&K officials felt would be unnecessary if the nation had a strong air program, the groups decided to proceed with a joint program. The idea, *Aviation Week* explained, "was that the Legion, one of the largest organized citizens' bodies, could carry the message of the hazards of a crippled air fleet to the grass roots in the hope it would filter up to Congress."⁴⁰

The program to inform and enlist the 800,000 Legion members' active support took place at national, regional, state, and community levels during 1947 and 1948, virtually all with H&K's assistance. Nationally, Legion leaders made statements and called for legislative action, and the national *Legionnaire* and *American Legion Magazine* frequently carried articles on air power. The program also targeted newsreels, prints of which could be purchased after play in theaters had ended. It also included a radio series, "A Report to the People on the Race for Air Power," carried over more than 650 stations. H&K promoted the radio series by preparing a brochure and stories to be distributed to local newspapers. The agency also developed a comprehensive publicity handbook containing suggested speeches, editorials, news and feature stories, an agenda for an air power meeting, and drafts of messages to members of Congress.

Hill and Knowlton facilitated numerous other Legion air power activities. Executives sent to the Legion thousands of copies of *Planes* and 25,000 copies of a thirty-two page selection from the *Congressional Record* for distribution to the air forces, Legion posts, and editors on the Legion's mailing list. H&K also secured featured speakers for the Legion's regional air power conferences and offered assistance at state conventions with an air power theme or speakers.⁴¹

³⁹ Goss to Fellers, 14 Jan. 1947, Hill papers, box 53, folder 13; Bill Bottoms, *The VFW: An Illustrated History of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States* (Rockville, Md., 1991), 110.

⁴⁰ Goss to Hill, 30 Oct. 1947, Hill papers, box 46, folder 10; Goss to Hill, n.d., Hill papers, box 44, folder 5; "How Potent is the Legion?" *Aviation Week* 47 (July 14, 1947): 7.

⁴¹ "Report on the American Legion-AIA Community Air Power Program," 6 Jan. 1947, Hill papers, box 44, folder 5. "Current Activities of the American Legion Program," 29

One last group offered vital assistance for the AIA: the member companies' biggest customer, the U.S. military. That the AIA had selected AAF General Oliver Echols as its president reflected a commitment to maintaining close ties to the military. Bert Goss regularly met with AAF and Air Force officers, including those employed in public relations. Goss and another H&K executive, John Mapes, made speeches on public relations before the Army Information School on AAF public relations.⁴²

The AIA also held annual conferences in Williamsburg for military, government, and industry officials. Closed, confidential, and off-the-record, the meetings provided a forum for discussing mutual problems and formulating potential solutions. According to Hill and Knowlton records, the second conference, held in 1947, included participation by sixty government and military officials from the Army Ground Forces, Army Air Forces, Navy, Bureau of Aeronautics, Civil Aeronautics Administration, Civil Aeronautics Board, Air Transport Association and U.S. Department of Commerce, plus aircraft manufacturers.⁴³

This close relationship enabled Hill and Knowlton to provide its expertise to improve military public relations. In 1947, for example, Bert Goss previewed an AAF film on air power. He disliked the film, finding it too lengthy, and vowed to "keep after the AAF boys" to make deletions. Similarly, Hill and Knowlton executives prepared a draft of remarks for Symington's review. They did the same for industry officials. Goss also conferred with Colonel C. J. Brown, head of the Army Air Force Office of Public Relations, about the overall organization and planning of the air power campaign. They discussed objectives, "final determination as to who should do what," and "who will coordinate or supervise the activities of all the various groups that will be affected or that may possibly participate."⁴⁴

May 1947, Hill papers, box 43, folder 11; "The First Quarter's Results," n.d., Hill papers, box 44, folder 5; "The Community Air Power Program," n.d., Hill papers, box 44, folder 5.

⁴² Goss to William Wagner, 7 Jan. 1947, Hill papers, box 44, folder 1. See correspondence in Hill papers, box 1, folder 7.

⁴³ "Report of the President," AIA Annual Report, 4 Dec. 1947, Hill papers, box 44, folder 6. A letter of invitation and memorandum on the first meeting appear in the Symington papers: John E. P. Morgan to Symington, 13 June 1946, box 1, Correspondence; P.R. Release 47-34, Hill papers, box 52, folder 14.

⁴⁴ J. B. M. to Symington, 5 Sept. 1947, Symington papers, box 1, Correspondence-Air Policy Commission; Goss to Col. C. J. Brown, Hill papers, box 44, folder 1.

Whether or not so planned, Goss himself took on the role of coordinator.

Coordinating the Campaign

With so many groups taking part in the air power campaign, there was a pressing need for coordination from the top. One of H&K's most time-consuming roles consisted of serving as an information clearinghouse, providing assistance to journalists, government bodies, civic groups, the military, and individuals. This alignment of interested parties represented H&K's most important contribution to the air power campaign.

Hill and Knowlton's first priority was keeping its client informed on all aspects of aviation issues, ranging from legislation to new technology. For this reason the Washington office frequently sent to all AIA members lists of upcoming events, meetings, and speeches of interest. The "Weekly Washington Bulletin" contained brief stories on legislative action, industry activities, and even annotated listings of press, radio, and book-length coverage of relevant issues. The agency also sent out regular "P.R. Memos" to AIA member companies. These topical reports might include discussion of a bill pending in Congress or a forthcoming article in *Aviation Week*—anything that manufacturers might find useful.⁴⁵

Hill and Knowlton executives wanted to encourage industry interaction with legislators and aviation organizations, so they created a "Washington Information Directory," published annually. This booklet included the names and addresses of every contact a manufacturer might need, ranging from the Senate Armed Services and House Post Office and Civil Service committee chairs to Civil Aeronautics Board members. A booklet on the two policy commissions, with background information on the history and major questions before the boards, supplemented the 1947 directory. H&K executives also planned the annual Williamsburg meetings for industry, government, and military officials.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ "Dates," P.R. Release 47-30 for 6 May to 16 June 1947, Hill papers, box 52, folder 14; "Weekly Washington Bulletin," Hill papers, box 47, folder 6. Only two copies remain in the Hill collection, from 1945 and 1946, so it is not clear how long the agency continued to send them to the companies. P.R. Memos, Hill papers, boxes 49-51.

⁴⁶ "Washington Information Directory," Hill papers, box 54, folder 4; "Background Information on the President's Temporary Air Policy Commission and the Joint Congressional Policy Board," Sept. 1947, Hill papers, box 44, folder 2.



"The First Quarter's Results". An American Legion first quarter report on grassroots work. (Reproduced from the Hill Papers, courtesy of State Historical Society of Wisconsin.)

Goss and his staff worked to establish AIA as the definitive source of industry statistics and information for government agencies, the media, and the military. Executives compiled material for both the Finletter and the Congressional commissions. "A great number of special studies have been prepared and supplied to these Boards on request," H&K reported. It even coordinated industry testimony before the various policy boards. The news media sought material from Hill and Knowlton, both directly and from *Planes*, which journalists had permission to quote freely. Military officials also requested materials from H&K, as when the Air Force asked for a special run of the advance press proofs of Senator Bridges' *Planes*

article ghosted by H&K writers, "so that one copy could be given to every delegate to the recent American Legion convention."⁴⁷

Sometimes H&K even served as a conduit for information not originating at AIA. The agency sent a copy of the VFW booklet "Downpayment on Survival in the Air Age" to a military official in 1949, and it facilitated the purchase by other organizations of copies of the summary to the Finletter report. It printed a booklet of "Editorials on the Crisis in Air Power," to send to other editors. This booklet contained pieces from respected papers such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. H&K even excerpted a copy of a letter from the Commander of the VFW to President Truman, made copies in patriotic red and blue ink, and suggested that the VFW send them to all local posts to hang as posters or send to legislators. The agency also sent the letter to the Air Force Association, urging its use as either a mailer to members or a full-page promotion in the *Air Force Magazine*. Executives made frequent use of reprints of speeches and articles presented by other organizations, many of which had been prepared by or with the assistance of H&K itself.⁴⁸

Air Power's Appeal: Media, Congressional, and Public Support

The air power campaign garnered impressive news media coverage. Among local media, the Legion claimed to have gotten 4,878 column inches on the air power program from March to June, 1947. Most stories average twelve to fifteen inches, so the Legion activities had prompted several hundred stories in papers around the nation. H&K's publicity of the Finletter report also helped capture journalists' attention. The air policy report ranked fifth in importance on the editorial page and sixth on the front page of the nation's newspapers during the week of the report's release in January, 1948. Not

⁴⁷ P.R. Memo 47-103, Activity Report for 1 Sept. to 1 Dec. 1947, Hill papers, box 43, folder 11. See also, Goss to Hill, draft "Memo to Committee," 30 Dec. 1946, box 46, folder 9. Goss to Leland Taylor, 26 Oct. 1948, Hill papers, box 46, folder 12.

⁴⁸ Goss to Brig. Gen. W. D. Eckert, 21 June 49, Hill papers, box 46, folder 13; Goss to Charles Frazer, 15 Jan. 1948, Hill papers, box 46, folder 11; "Editorials on the Crisis in Air Power," Hill papers, box 44, folder 2; Goss to Fellers, 14 Jan. 1947, Hill papers, box 53, folder 13; Louis E. Starr to VFW Comrades, 23 Jan. 1947, Hill papers, box 43, folder 11; Goss to Clyde Mathews, 14 Jan. 1947, Hill papers, box 53, folder 13. Along with *Planes* articles by senators, H&K reprinted copies of a *Collier's* series titled, "Will Russia Rule the Air?" P.R. Memo 47-23, Activity Report for 17 Feb. to 18 March 1947, Hill papers, box 43, folder 11.

only did the media cover the report, but, according to Hill and Knowlton, they “wholeheartedly” supported the commission’s findings.⁴⁹

The industry also gained support in Congress, made evident by the 1948 appropriations battle. Secretary Symington’s proposed seventy-group minimum for the Air Force had been approved by both commissions, so when President Truman and Secretary of Defense James Forrestal recommended a much smaller allocation, such advocates as *Aviation Week* considered it a “betrayal.” The magazine ran a three-week-long editorial campaign against the administration for “stupidly closing their eyes to the lessons of World War II.” Forrestal offered a compromise of sixty-six groups, which involved taking about 300 B-29s out of storage—a “mothball fleet.” In the end, Congress surprised no one by appropriating the larger amount, but Truman ordered his appointees not to spend it.⁵⁰

Congress could take its stand firm in the belief that the public supported strong air forces. The first postwar Gallup survey on the subject, taken in February, 1949, found that seventy percent of the sample favored increasing the Air Force budget. More than a third of the people surveyed were in favor of a higher budget even if it meant higher taxes. The few letters President Truman received on his air policies generally favored a strong aerial arm. One disabled veteran of the naval air forces wrote to Truman accusing the President of “gross negligence & betrayal of the trust of the nation.” Another writer supported Symington in the seventy-group fight, telling Truman to “Leave your sec’y for air alone—this USA is with him.”⁵¹

With increased media, public, and political support, AIA began to achieve its goals. Procurement started to increase by the end of the decade, fueled in great part by military spending relating to the Korean “police action.” Industry-wide production, employment, and sales figures all began an upward climb by 1950. The AIA estimated

⁴⁹ P.R. Memo 48-10, Activity Report for 2 Dec. 1947 to 23 Jan. 1948, Hill papers, box 43, folder 11.

⁵⁰ Symington to Finletter, 28 Oct. 1947, PAPC, box 18, C2-8; “The Betrayal of Air Power,” *Aviation Week* 48 (April 5, 1948): 50; (12 April 1948): 54; and (19 April 1948): 66; “Expansible Industry or Mothball Fleet?” *Aviation Week* 48 (3 May 1948): 50. For a thorough description of these events, see Stephen K. Bailey and Howard D. Samuel, *Congress at Work* (New York, 1952), 357–81.

⁵¹ “Strengthening of Air Power Gets Big Vote in Survey,” for release 20–21 Feb. 1949, American Institute of Public Opinion papers, HSTL, box 1; David C. Lewis to Truman, 23 Aug. 1947, Harry S. Truman papers, HSTL, Official File 1639, 1285-D, hereafter Truman OF. Dr. Bullard to Truman, 15 April 1948, Truman OF 1639, 1285-D.

sales for 1950 at 6,520 planes, with about 3,000 going to the military; by 1955, it estimated sales at 13,153 airplanes, with about 8,400 for the military. Industry employment rose from a low of 237,700 in 1948 to 281,800 in 1950 and 773,300 in 1955. Net sales of twelve major airframe companies jumped from their low of \$519 million in 1946 to over \$1.38 billion in 1950 and more than \$5.18 billion in 1955. Profits rose out of the red to \$62.6 million in the black in 1950, according to the AIA. Airlines, too, reported better financial health by 1950 after a low point in 1947, when they reported a combined loss of more than \$26 million.⁵²

Along with a more secure financial position, the AIA had also taken steps toward achieving other long-term goals. Appropriations to NACA (NASA's predecessor), together with Project RAND, an experimental Air Force-Douglas Aircraft partnership, and other projects fulfilled the industry's desire for "continuation of Government-Science-Industry partnership." RAND later became an independent think tank, but such federally-funded research and development projects gave the industry hope that similar activities would continue. The AIA's main desire had been a long-term air policy, and although the Finletter and Congressional commissions could not guarantee long-term funding for procurement or research, they did seem to reflect a public commitment to air power. On the whole, as compared to 1943, the environment for aircraft manufacturing was much improved by 1950.⁵³

Air Power Is Peace Power: Effects of a National Opinion Campaign

The air power campaign attracted a great deal of attention, but the improved status of aircraft manufacturing did not derive from the public relations campaign alone. The program had, after all, essentially failed immediately after the war, although procurement remained higher than it had previously been in peacetime. But it was hardly enough to ensure a prosperous industry, and H&K called 1947 "a year in which manufacturing companies again hit bottom."⁵⁴

⁵² AIA 1956, 7, 20, 30; Ralph S. Damon, "Airline Outlook," *Air Affairs* 3 (Dec. 1950): 460.

⁵³ Bruce L. R. Smith, *The RAND Corporation: Case Study of a Nonprofit Advisory Corporation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966); Rand Corporation, *Rand 25th Anniversary Volume* (Santa Monica, Calif., 1973), v; and Saul Friedman, "The Rand Corporation and Our Policy Makers" *Atlantic Monthly* 212 (Sept. 1963): 61-8.

⁵⁴ "The Aircraft Industry, 1903-1953," AIA booklet, Hill papers, box 43, folder 8.

Numerous factors other than the campaign can also explain public support for air power during the late 1940s. The romance of the airplane provided one incentive for confidence in air power. Not only fiction but also true tales of such romantic figures as the Wright brothers, Amelia Earhart, and Eddie Rickenbacker fed what one historian has called the "extraordinary affection millions of American men, women and children felt for the flying machine during the half century after its invention." So great was interest in aviation that, according to Hill and Knowlton, one company produced and was able to market "Air Age News," a six-day-a-week fifteen-minute transcribed radio program about aviation, which was broadcast over as many as 315 radio stations throughout the United States, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Panama.⁵⁵

A small but growing number of citizens had begun to experience flight first hand. In 1941, nineteen companies operated domestic airlines, with 370 aircraft flying over 45,000 miles annually. By 1950 the nation boasted thirty-eight operators flying 960 airplanes about 77,000 miles annually. Air travel, expressed as a fraction of railroad passenger travel, climbed from just over five in 1941 to thirty-three in 1950. These increases suggest growing interest and trust in civilian air travel, which may well have translated into some support for military air power.⁵⁶

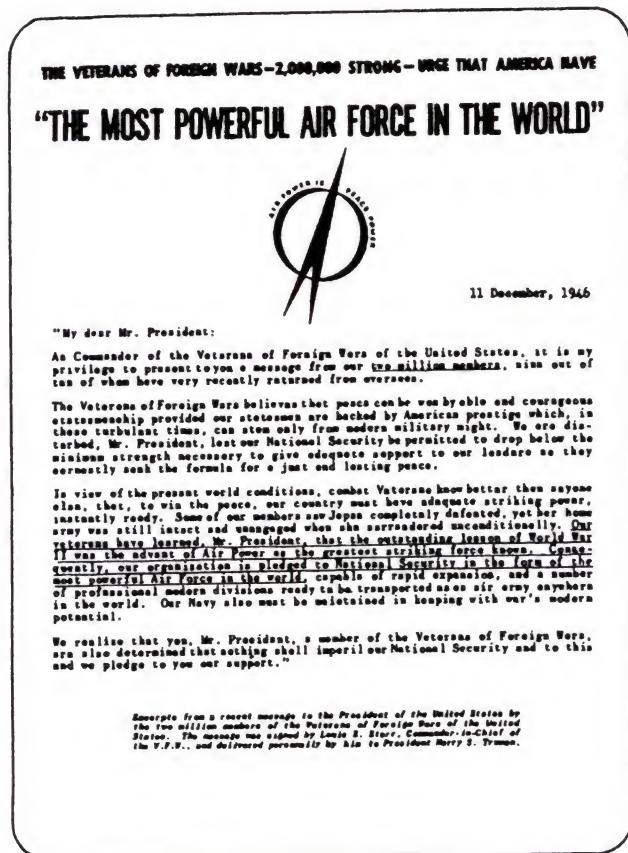
Then, too, large segments of the population already held an interest in national defense issues. During a one-month period in 1947, the AIA's traveling speaker filled twenty dates, most before Rotary Clubs, and this demand suggests that people were interested in defense and wanted to learn about air power. Although few air power supporters mentioned the Japanese aerial attack on Pearl Harbor, frequent references to the "lessons of World War II" bespoke a level of determination not to be caught short a second time, especially not in the atomic age.⁵⁷ The atomic bomb unquestionably altered people's opinions about the airplane.

The industry's own record during and after the war also encour-

⁵⁵ Fred C. Kelly, *Miracle at Kitty Hawk* (New York, 1951); Joseph C. Corn, *The Winged Gospel: America's Romance with Aviation, 1900-1953* (New York, 1983), vii. On fiction, see Laurence Goldstein, *The Flying Machine and Modern Literature* (Bloomington, Ind., 1986), which analyzes stories about flying from Leonard da Vinci to the moon-walk.

⁵⁶ AIA 1956, 61-2.

⁵⁷ "AIA Report of the President for 1945 and Program for 1946," Boeing-Vertol Division papers, box 30, AIA-1949; P.R. Memo 47-14, Activity Report for 18 Jan. to 17 Feb. 1947, Hill papers, box 43, folder 11. See copies of three speeches in Hill papers, box 53, folder 9.



"The Most Powerful Airforce in the World" • H&K took this VFW letter to the president, made it into a poster, and distributed it. (Reproduced from the Hill Papers, courtesy of State Historical Society of Wisconsin.)

aged support for air power. Its wartime performance, building some 300,000 planes, 800,000 engines, and 700,000 propellers, had impressed many Americans. The Berlin Airlift was just as remarkable. Beginning in the summer of 1948, the USSR had blockaded Berlin by stopping all ground traffic from the West. Determined not to give up the German city so easily, the United States and British air forces flew over the blockade through closely guarded air corridors, taking off or landing a plane every ninety seconds for several months, in order to bring in tons of food, coal, and raw materials for Berlin's factories. The industry's record was not H&K's doing, of

course, and it is difficult to imagine that people would not have known about these heroics even without the agency's widespread publicity.⁵⁸

In fact, such exploits as the Berlin Airlift may even have contributed to an "oversell" of air power. Many military and manufacturing experts argued that air power could bring world peace. "[I]f we can develop air power to its maximum potential, commensurate with technological possibilities of our day," wrote ~~manufacturer~~ and former Army Air Corps ~~major~~ Alexander De Seversky, "we can create a force that will guarantee peace for the foreseeable future." Not everyone uncritically accepted the proposition that strategic air bombing had been the decisive weapon of the war. Defense Secretary ~~Forrestal~~, for one, challenged the notion. ~~Morale bombing~~ especially had been a disappointment, at least prior to Hiroshima.⁵⁹

Congressional support for air power probably had more to do with finding an alternative to President Truman's proposed universal military training than to blind faith in the airplane. As Senator Robert A. Taft wrote, "It seems to me so obvious that the air is more important than universal military training." A cheaper alternative than a large standing army, air power seemed a good choice to budget-minded Republicans like Taft. Although UMT remained popular with the American public, for members of Congress it was "anathema." By April, 1948, even Secretary Forrestal gave UMT little chance if Congress appropriated the extra funding for air power. The military training bill that finally passed only provided for a voluntary program.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Barry Blueston, Peter Jordan, and Mark Sullivan, *Aircraft Industry Dynamics: An Analysis of Competition, Capital, and Labor* (Boston, Mass., 1981), 27. Corridors were 20-mile wide air lanes protected by written agreement; the allies also responded with a counterblockade of the eastern zone. AIA, *Aircraft Year Book for 1949* (Washington, D.C., 1949), 119; Yergin, *Shattered Peace*, 377, 387.

⁵⁹ Michael S. Sherry, *Preparing for the Next War: American Plans for Postwar Defense, 1941-45* (New Haven, 1977), 207; Alexander P. De Seversky, "The U.S. Air Force in Power Politics," *Air Affairs* 2 (Winter 1949): 477; Walter Millis, ed. *The Forrestal Diaries* (New York, 1951), 514; Lee Kennett, *A History of Strategic Bombing* (New York, 1982), 182-83, 185.

⁶⁰ Warner R. Schilling, "The Politics of National Defense: Fiscal 1950," in ed. Walter R. Schilling, Paul Y. Hammond, and Glenn H. Snyder, *Strategy, Politics and Defense Budgets* (New York, 1962), 45; Robert A. Taft to Abe McGregor Goff, 17 Jan. 1948, Taft papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., box 893, Air Force-1948; Sherry, *Preparing for the Next War*, 224. See Gallup news releases on defense spending and the UMT for 11 Jan. and 27 Dec. 1946; 16 Feb., 23 March, 13 June 1947; 19 Jan. and 9 April 1948. Support for the UMT consistently ran at about seventy percent. Millis, *The Forrestal Diaries*, 426; Susan M. Hartmann, "President Truman and the 80th Congress" (Ph.D. diss., University of Missouri, 1966), 172.

Most important to the success of the crusade for air power was the threat posed by "Communist aggression." The years of the air power campaign were fraught with international tension. Against the backdrop of the Marshall plan, the Berlin blockade, and Communist activities in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Greece, the AIA relentlessly promoted air power as the best hope for peace. The Air Force launched its seventy-group campaign, and the Finletter commission emphasized the likelihood that other countries would develop nuclear power. Gallup polls revealed that Americans increasingly said that they believed the USSR wanted to "build herself up to be the ruling power." As an employee of an AIA-member company mused, "with all due respect to AIA's effective PR work, we must not overlook the fact that the Russians are at least in part responsible for public and Congressional support of our expanded air power program."⁶¹

H&K consciously tried to avoid using the Russian threat as part of a scare campaign. Bert Goss twice reprimanded the AIA's speaker, Harvey Stowers, for including comments on "the Russian situation" in his speeches. Goss reminded him that "it is absolutely imperative that we do not get involved in any question of war mongering, and it is absolutely vital that we do not try to become an authority or a source of information about foreign developments." The speaker could get around this by refusing to make "any statements about Russia or any other country that can't be pinned down to someone else." H&K sometimes promoted aggressive statements by others, such as Senator Brewster's assertion that the country could not "afford to remain the world's third ranking air power." But Goss told Stowers, even when quoting others, "use the least inflammatory material."⁶² Even so, the undercurrent of international events did profoundly shape the debate.

⁶¹ Yergin, *Shattered Peace*, 358; Roger E. Bilstein, *Flight in America, 1900-1983: From the Wrights to the Astronauts* (Baltimore, Md., 1984), 185. News releases for 24 March 1948 and 4 July 1948, American Institute of Public Opinion papers, box 1. Monroe R. Brown to C. Hart Miller and Frank N. Piasecki, 24 Aug. 1951, Boeing-Vertol papers, box 30, AIA-1951.

⁶² Goss to Stowers, 19 Nov. 1947, Hill papers, box 53, folder 14; Goss to Stowers, 1 April 1948, Hill papers, box 46, folder 10; Tyndall to Hill, Goss and Mapes, 21 March 1947, box 53, folder 10.

Conclusion

By 1950 the AIA had begun to achieve its goals, but in truth the air power campaign was successful only when other groups became interested—and these groups got involved only when events seemed to demand it. In the end, H&K's work was significant primarily because it linked advocates together, producing an environment filled with messages supporting air power. Journalists, government officials, and civic groups received information and materials they used to inform other people about an issue they considered important. Hill and Knowlton did not create their interest in air power. But by publicizing pro-air power statements from numerous sources, the agency fashioned a favorable climate. This climate offered some measure of protection against taxpayers' complaints to members of Congress about increased air force appropriations.

By forcing a debate about air power into the forefront of public discussion, Hill and Knowlton's activities indirectly provided occasions for opposing viewpoints to be aired. Serious review of policy options appeared in the news media, as in an article in *Fortune* which noted that even with a strong air power program, "peace is not guaranteed." The various policy review boards made extensive use of industry and military sources, but they conducted exhaustive studies, with the Finletter commission alone hearing more than 150 witnesses in over 200 meetings. National defense had clearly become an important issue to significant numbers of people. In his famous warning against the dangers of the military-industrial complex, President Eisenhower also noted that "we can no longer risk emergency improvisation of national defense." Eisenhower went on to say that "we have been compelled in the U.S. to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions."⁶³

Americans may have overreacted, or were too trusting in Air Force estimates of requirements, as scholars such as Kofsky and Trento suggest. But the "inescapable fact" still remains, as John Lewis Gaddis points out, that the Soviet Union alarmed a good portion of the rest of the world, too. One of the few citizens who wrote to Truman regarding air power begged him not to sign the seventy-

⁶³ "The Wildest Blue Yonder Yet," *Fortune* 38 (March 1948): 95; see also, Hanson W. Baldwin, "What Air Power Can—and Cannot—Do," *New York Times Magazine* (30 May 1948): 5–7+, and "Shall We Have Airplanes?" *Fortune* 37 (Jan. 1947): 77–81+. Wilson, COHC, 813; Yergin, *Shattered Peace*, 339–41; Baker, HSTL, 53; Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Liberty Is at Stake," *Vital Speeches of the Day* 27 (17 Jan. 1961): 229.

group bill, because "millions of loyal Americans like me" are "terrified to the core at the thought of what such an armament will mean to the future—and even present—policy of our country."⁶⁴ Most other thinking citizens appeared to be convinced that the steps were necessary, however distasteful. The advent of the Korean conflict in June, 1950, seemed to prove them right.

Hill and Knowlton continued to work for the AIA for many years, but the hardest part of its work was done. Once citizens and government officials agreed to and established a policy of peacetime armament, the aircraft manufacturers' position was more secure. H&K had not fooled or forced anyone to accept a military-industrial complex. But the agency's coordination of industry, military, and civilian support for air power, together with domestic politics, citizens' beliefs about airplanes and atomic bombs, and international events, created a climate where such a partnership was acceptable.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries Into the History of the Cold War* (New York, 1987), 42; Tracy D. Mygatt to Truman, 12 May 1948, Truman OF 1639, 1285-D.

⁶⁵ The AIA retained H&K well into the 1960s, but the client files describing their programs in the Hill papers end in the late 1950s.